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MONTANA SOICC NEWS

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The Coming Challenge

Average weekly earnings in the United States have fallen more than 12 percent since 1969. However, the burden has been shared unequally. The incomes of the top 30 percent of earners has actually gone up while those of the other 70 percent have accounted for all of the decrease. More and more, it takes the incomes from two working parents to support the family.

America has been enjoying an economic expansion. Forty million new jobs have been created. Fifty percent of the population is employed as opposed to forty percent in 1973. More people have been working so more has been produced. On the down side, it now takes nearly three years to achieve the same productivity improvement that used to be achieved in one year. Americans must improve productivity and our international competitive position to ensure a more prosperous future.

America's workplaces are modeled after mass manufacturing techniques developed around the turn of the century. Complex jobs are broken down into a series of simple tasks. This system requires workers who are reliable and willing to follow established routine day after day. Unfortunately, third world countries have production equipment and workers who will also do this type of work, but at much lower wages. The answer appears to be higher quality, higher priced goods, variety of goods, and responsiveness to changing consumer tastes. Achieving this answer will rely upon the creation of an educated workforce.

The National Center on Education and the Economy has proposed recommendations for achieving an educated workforce. First, a new educational standard would be established for all students, to be met by age 16. Students would be tested

WINTER 1991 ISSUE

The Coming Challenge 1
What Was the 80's Worth? 2
Hang Loose 2
Using MCIS with Career Development Guidelines 3
The Constitution 3
Facing the Facts 3
A Student's Best Friend is 4
Point - Counterpoint 4
School Grades 4
Publications 5
When Does the Interview Start? 5

The Coming Challenge (Continued)

at age 16, based on a series of performance based assessments. Those passing the tests would be issued a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM), qualifying them to choose among going to work, entering a college prepatory program, or studying for a Technical or Professional Certificate. States would be responsible, with federal assistance, for establishing alternative learning environments for those who cannot attain the CIM in regular schools. After passing the tests, students not choosing to attend college or university could choose to earn entry-level occupation specific certificates, based on completing a two- to four-year combined work and study program. A series of advanced certificates could be earned throughout the worker's career, attesting to the attainment of mastery of more and more complex skills.

This vision of America's educational and work future would require the efforts of national committees composed of business, labor, education and public representatives to define certification standards. Once in place, students could move easily between these programs and the workplace, having acquired the actual skills needed in occupations in the economy. The Commission's recommendations provide a framework for developing a high quality education and training system. It would be a uniquely American solution that has the potential of developing the world's premier workforce. For further information contact the National Center on Education and the Economy, 39 State Street, Suite 500, Rochester, NY 14614.

Source: National Center on Education and the Economy's Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce.

What Was the 80's Worth?

An article in American Demographics Magazine showed that the 80's were worth 8 cents to American women. In 1970 women were earning 59 cents for every dollar earned by men. In 1980 it had risen to 60 cents, and in 1990 it had risen to 68 cents. The income gap is greatest in managerial jobs, where women make 61 percent as much as male counterparts. This gap continues to grow. Between 1988 and 1989 male managers had income growth of 4 percent, while income growth for executive females showed no growth.

Two factors contributing to the continuing overall wage gap is the lack of females in the topmost tier level management and an increase of young single mothers in low-paying jobs. However, this gap is expected to close. More women are now filling mid-level professional positions in many businesses and are doing well financially.

Source: Executive Female, July/August 1991

Hang Loose

According to stress management experts, a lot of worrying is wasted as follows:

40% on things that never happen

35% on things that can't be changed

15% on things that turn out better than expected

8% on useless, petty worries

Only 2% of the average person's worrying time is spent on things that might be helped or somehow improved by worrying. Their advice is to refuse to worry about anything unless you have good reason to believe that worrying will actually do some good.

Using MCIS with Career Development Guidelines

The National Career Development Guidelines have had a lot of press lately. Now, the Montana Career Information System has developed a product to help make the Guidelines more understandable. A grid has been developed for each level of competencies - middle/junior high, high school and adult. Each grid includes the competencies and their indicators, and all components of MCIS. A glance at the grid will show which MCIS components can help you achieve which competencies with your students or clients. The grid can be extremely helpful for planning and assessment. For further information about the grids, contact Anne Wolfinger, Montana Career Information System, at (406) 444-1444, or write to MCIS, 1412 1/2 Eighth Avenue, Helena, MT 59620.

The Constitution

is the subject of a new series of booklets. The series is designed for adults and explains how the Constitution and the Bill of Rights affect them. Two editions were made - one for general audiences and one for adults with only intermediate basic skills. In addition to the booklets, a 30 minute videotape is available for $10. Interested? Contact the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, Adult Programs, at (202) USA-1787.

Source: A.L.L. Points Bulletin, August 1991

Facing the Facts

Business Week magazine included a special section in its November 25, 1991 issue, titled "Fighting For Our Future." This special section addresses problems faced by students and teachers in preparing for a future that demands better math and scientific skills than are possessed by today's students. The articles were authored by Kevin R. Hopkins, author, presidential special assistant and senior fellow with the Hudson Institute, and Susan L. Nestleroth, a labor-market analyst. Some interesting facts from the 40 page article follow.

A U.S. math test asked "What percent of 500 is 30?" A test from the Netherlands stated, "In 1980, the defense budget of a certain country was $30 million out of a total budget of $500 million. In 1981, the defense budget of that same country was $35 million out of a total budget of $605 million. The country's inflation rate for that one year period was 10%." The test then asked students to use these facts to argue that the defense budget had increased or decreased.

Schoolchildren spend five times as many hours watching TV as they apply to homework, 13 times as many hours as they spend reading.

Children between the ages of 3 and 5 average 28 hours of TV a week.

5% of high school seniors can read and understand technical materials, literary essays and college-level textbooks.

Facing the Facts (Continued)

The proportion of jobs requiring four years of high school math will be 60% greater in the 1990s as compared to the 1970s.

In high school exams 11th graders who have taken biology, chemistry or physics score an average of no more than 10 - 15% higher on tests in these subjects than do students that haven't taken the courses.

This special section explores different problems and solutions that appear to exist within today's school system. It would be well worth the time spent to locate a copy of the magazine. The magazine costs $2.50. Reprints of the article will be available after January 15, 1992. Persons interested in ordering reprints should write to Business Week, Attn: Angela Hamlet, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, 40th Floor, New York, NY 10020. Reprint costs will depend upon the number of requests, but are estimated to be between $1.00 and $2.00. Be sure to include your address and telephone number, as Ms Hamlet will contact you prior to the reprinting.

A Student's Best Friend is ...

Indiana has involved more than 1,000 elementary students in a new instructional program. The students were lent personal computers to use at home. The computers were used to do homework, consult with fellow students and their teachers, solve math problems, and allowed teachers and parents to confer electronically. Educators say students involved in the Buddy System Project demonstrate more self-reliance, higher self-esteem and greater pride in their work. The project hopes to expand to 2,000 students in over 19 schools during this school year, and to be in place for every child in the 4th through 12th grades in the future. The project was initiated by a group composed of corporations, foundations and government agencies in an effort to improve tomorrow's work force.

Source: Business Week, July 29, 1991

Point - Counterpoint

Average scores for GED graduates on the Tests of Social Studies, Interpreting Literature and the Arts, and Science were higher than those of graduating high school seniors. (American Council on Education national survey, 1989) On the down side, a new study done at the University of Chicago shows that holders of GEDs do about as badly in terms of wages, hours of work, unemployment and tenure as high school dropouts; GED holders who opted for additional schooling bettered their future wages and economic performance. Even those who went on to college did less well economically than high school graduates who entered college.

Source: Business Week, October 7, 1991)

School Grades

A 1991 national poll reveals what Americans think of their schools.

Excellent	15%
Good	55%
Not So Good	18%
Poor	8%

Source: Governing Magazine, September 1991

When Does the Interview Start?

A young college student preparing for his first interview was advised by friends to exaggerate his work experience (nothing more than the usual summertime jobs). They also advised him to be serious, dour, sophisticated and a lot of other things he was not. When he arrived for the interview, he was escorted to an office by a genial woman he assumed was a secretary. They began chatting and because she was so open and friendly, he decided he could find out what the job involved by asking the secretary questions. The conversation went smoothly and after an hour the fear and trepidation had been replaced by enthusiasm about the position. He was about to ask about the upcoming interview when the woman informed him that the job was his. The pleasant conversation had turned out to be the interview. The young man had learned an important lesson: Be yourself. (Another point not to be overlooked is the young man's assumption that the woman was a secretary.)

Source: CAM Report, Priam Publications, September 1, 1991

Publications

"Getting Back to Work", Bureau of Labor Statistics. A self-help pamphlet for dislocated workers. Describes job seeking strategies and where to find job announcements. Contains a sample resume, cover letter, and common questions asked during job interviews. Employment trends tables contain detailed information for 250 occupations that are most likely to require the skills of displaced workers. Also contains questions job seekers should ask prospective employers. The pamphlet should be available at your local Job Service office, or contact BLS Office of Employment Projections, 600 E Street N.W., Bicentennial Building, Room 9216, Washington, DC ((202) 272-5381).

"Government Books For You", Superintendent of Documents. Catalog of books available on agriculture, education, energy, health, history, space and more. Various prices. Write: Free Catalog, P.O. Box 37000, Washington, DC 20013-7000, for a list of current offerings.

"Career America", Office of Personnel Management. A 265 Federal Career Directory. Answers most common questions about how to apply for Federal jobs. Gives detailed profile of each Federal department and agency, address and phone number. Links college majors/areas of studies with appropriate federal agencies. May be available at 2 and 4 year colleges or public libraries (3,000 were sent out). Order from Superintendent of Documents, US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20420-9325. Stock number 006-000-01339-2. Cost is $31.00

"American Trade Schools Directory", Croner Publications. Lists more than 12,000 trade, technical and vocational schools in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Includes name, address, telephone, contact name, approval and accrediting institution codes, occupation code. Amendments are mailed ten months out of the year. Offered by Croner Publications, 34 Jericho Turnpike, Jericho, NY 11753 ((516) 333-9085). Cost is $99.95 per year.

Eric Johnson, Editor
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Program Officer
Montana SOICC

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, write to the Montana SOICC at P.O. Box 1728, Helena, MT 59624. The Montana SOICC reserves the right to edit all information submitted.

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